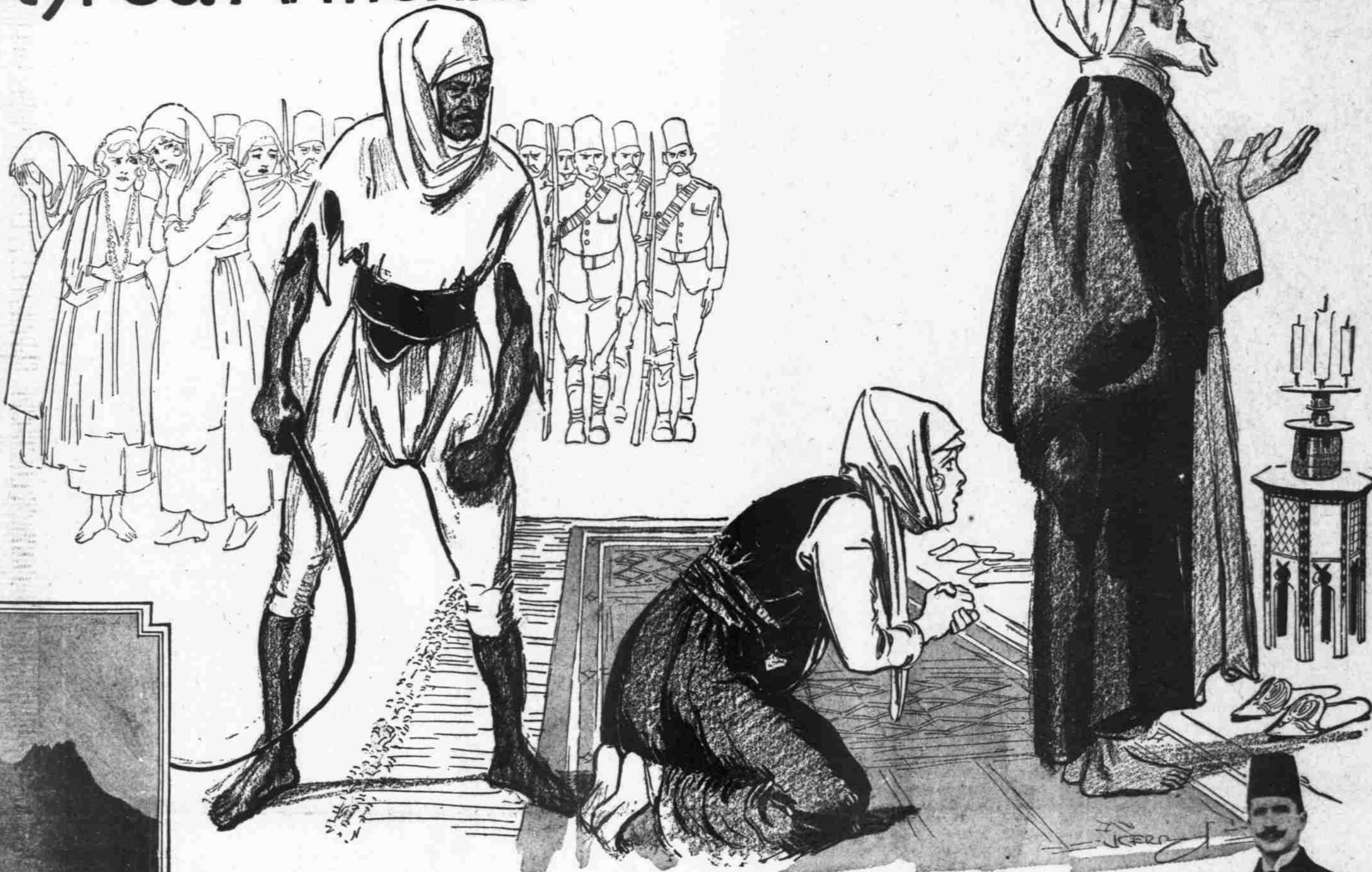


artyred Armenia"



"The Khatieb bared his feet and stepped upon the prayer rug and turned to Mecca. Allah is most great—there is no God but Allah! his voice droned. The bashi-bazouk flung the nearest girl onto the carpet. He held his cruel whip ready to strike if she did not kneel—her face also turned to Mecca. Her flesh was already torn and bleeding. Terror of the whip was in her heart. To escape it she could only say the rek 'ah—'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.'"

We never saw the others again. Among them were the mothers and aunts whom the young girls chosen by Hadji Ghafour had renounced their religion to save. If they were saved, we knew not how nor where.

Of the other young women, Hadji Ghafour selected twenty-three, as I counted later. These were the prettiest of face and most pleasing of figure. They were taken to still another room and locked in.

The fate of the rest of the two hundred, who were not satisfactory to Hadji Ghafour, although the soldiers had selected them for him, I do not know either. A soldier told one of us they were taken to the public slave market, which had been revived in Geulik for the Turks of the middle class who were not in Hadji Ghafour's favor.

We were given food and taken to the hamman, or bath chamber, and garments were brought for those whose clothes were frayed or, as it was with some, who had almost none at all. Turkish women and negro slave girls watched us in the bath and looked us up again.

At the end of the hour we heard steps. The door was opened and a huge black slave, with bashi-bazouks behind him, summoned us. Frightened and too cowed to ask questions or hold back, we followed the slave, the bashi-bazouks falling in behind, through halls and up stairways, until we came to a huge rug-strewn chamber, brilliantly lighted with lamps and candles. In chairs heavy with cushions, at one side of the room, sat him whom we knew as Hadji Ghafour, and a group of other Turks who were of his class, all middle aged or older, none with a kindly face.

The negro led us opposite the Turks and halted us. One whom I was told later was Shevket Pacha, the Kamaikam of Geulik, complimented Hadji Ghafour upon his taste in bringing before them "such a pleasing show of converts."

The door we had entered opened again and the other party of young women selected by Hadji Ghafour were pushed in. The negro ordered us back, across the room, while those who were not apostates were displayed to the Turks.

At a sign from Hadji Ghafour an officer, who had entered with a group of soldiers, crossed the room and spoke to the second party of girls. "It is the will of the good Hadji Ghafour, whose house has given you refuge," said the officer, "that you repay his kindness in saving you from the dangers that confront your people by re-

penting of your unbelief and accept the grace of Islam."

The Turks made sounds of approval and the officer clapped his hands. A turbaned Khatieb, or priest of the mosque, entered the chamber, with an attendant who carried the prayer rug. Behind him was a huge bashi-bazouk, carrying a whip of bull's hide. The prayer rug was spread, and the Khatieb waited.

The officer pointed to a shrinking girl and the soldiers pulled her out. "What say you?" the officer asked. "I belong to God—in His keeping I must remain," the girl replied. The soldier stepped back and the bashi-bazouk's whip fell across her shoulders. When she screamed for mercy the Khatieb bared his feet, stepped upon the prayer rug and turned to Mecca. "Allah is most great; there is no God but Allah!" his voice droned. The bashi-bazouk flung the girl onto the carpet. He held his cruel whip ready to strike again if she did not quickly kneel. Her face also turned to Mecca as she stumbled to her knees. Her flesh was already torn and bleeding. Terror of the whip was in her heart. To escape it she could only say the rek 'ah—"There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet."

As each girl rose from the prayer rug she was thrust among those of the first group who were already apostates—all but me, whom God had spared that shame in the kindness of the American lady at Malatia. When the last one had recited the sacrilegious creed the Khatieb folded the prayer rug and left the room. Hadji Ghafour, smiling now, ordered us all to stand before his guests again. All were apostates now, and the Kamaikam's law as well as Hadji Ghafour's piety allowed them to do with us as they chose.

One by one they selected us, according to their fancies—Hadji Ghafour first, and then his guests. How they had arranged the order of choice I do not know, but they had agreed among themselves. There were five or six girls for each of the Turks. I was among those ordered aside for Hadji Ghafour, who had also chosen the two daughters who had been compelled to leave their mother dying on the Sivas road.

The two sisters had been very quiet all that day. They had spoken but little to any of the rest of us since we were taken into the house of Hadji Ghafour. Nor had they cried—afterwards I remembered how their faces that day seemed to be lighted with a great courage.

The girls chosen by the guests of Hadji Ghafour were taken away by the soldiers in separate groups to the houses of those who claimed their bodies. When these guests and their captives had gone Hadji Ghafour again summoned us before him. It was one of the sisters, the elder, to whom he spoke first. His words were terrible. He asked her, oh, so cruelly low and soft, if she were willing to belong to him, body and soul, to live contented in his house, to be obedient and affectionate as well.

The girl waited not an instant. "I renounced my God

to save my mother, but it availed me nothing. Her life was taken. I have given back myself to God, and I will not dishonor Him again!"

Hadji Ghafour motioned to his negro slave, who caught the girl in his arms and carried her out of the room. Her sister had been standing near her. Hadji Ghafour's eyes fell upon her next.

"And you, my little one," he said, just as low and soft. And he repeated the questions to her he had spoken to her sister. She spoke softly, too—softer than had her sister, yet just as firmly. "She was my sister. With her I saw my mother die, and now you have taken her. I, too, have asked God to take me again to Him. You may kill me also, but I will never submit to you."

Those of us who watched looked with terror at Hadji Ghafour. This time his eyes narrowed and glittered. "You have spoken well, my little one," he said, still so gently he might have been speaking to a beloved daughter. "Perhaps I had better kill you as a warning to my other little ones."

The bashi-bazouk with the whip stood near. Hadji Ghafour did not even speak to him—just motioned with his hands. Two other bashi-bazouks sprang forward. Quickly they stripped the girl of her clothes until there was not a garment left about her. Then they lifted her body from the floor, one holding her hands, the other her feet, until she swung between them like a hammock.

Then, while we screamed with the horror of it, the third bashi-bazouk brought his whip down upon the sway-

ing body. I shut my eyes so I could not see, but I could not shut out the sound of the whip cutting into the flesh, again and again, until I lost count. Even when the girl screamed no more and her moans died away the whip did not stop for a long time. Then suddenly I realized the blows had ceased. I looked and saw one of the bashi-bazouks lifting the girl's body from the floor. He held her by the waist, and her arms and bleeding legs hung limp. She was dead.

There was none other who could be brave after that. We gave Hadji Ghafour our promises. One girl he signed to follow him when he left the room, and the negro slave walked behind them. The three of us who remained were taken out another door, this time to the women's apartments, where slave women were waiting to receive us.

Djevdet Bey,
the
Governor of
Van,
One of the
Most Powerful
Turkish
Officials in
Armenia, and
the One :
Most Trusted
by Enver Pacha
and
Talaat Bey
in Carrying
Out the
Massacres.
Aurora
Will Tell
Later on How
She Was
Sold to Him
for One
Medjidian—
85 Cents



"I counted bodies laid at the roadside until I could count no longer! I wondered if God could make room for all of them in heaven."

(Continued Next Sunday)